

## **Appropriations Committee Public Hearing**

### **Testimony of Daniel Donovan Chairman of the Discovery Museum Board**

**February 17, 2010**

My name is Daniel Donovan and I am the Board Chairman for the Discovery Museum in Bridgeport, Connecticut. We are extremely grateful to the State of Connecticut for the generous support that it has provided to the Museum. For almost 50 years, the Museum has provided a valuable service to the community which becomes especially important in these economically challenged times. The targeted grants from the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism has served as a lifeline for our organization allowing us to provide a platform for the math and sciences to more than 75,000 annual museum visitors and a science based educational service to over 40,000 K – 8 students. With the recent start of construction of the 500 student Inter-district Discovery Science Magnet School adjacent to the Museum, we will shortly have the added opportunity and responsibilities to work in a unique national education model for which we have no additional funding.

#### **The Discovery Museum Plays a Crucial Role in a Bringing Math and Science to the Community**

In the past year, the Discovery Museum has continued in its mission to educate our State's children in science and math. Our Museum educators have served 543 school groups on-site and 400 groups off-site reaching nearly 40,000 children from 50 Connecticut cities and towns. We deliver almost 3,500 hours in Bridgeport public and parochial classrooms teaching hands-on, minds-on science with curriculum that meet State Department of Education standards. Discovery's programs are especially valued by schools since they cover specific science topics now included on the Connecticut Mastery

Test. In addition we are home to the NASA Challenger Center, one of only 52 centers world-wide that provides group learning in a simulator Mars mission setting.

In addition to offering educational programs, the Museum hosted a variety of events including

- a 4-day Discover Green Expo that was a regional event funded in part by the United Illuminating Company and the Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund
- the LCROSS Rocket Impact on the moon event for which the Discovery Museum was the only Connecticut live-stream site carrying the NASA feed and had the second largest attendance in the country for this event
- Lectures by inspirational figures such as Dr. Heidi Hammel, a Senior Research Scientist with the Space Science Institute in Boulder, Colorado listed as “one of the world’s top 50 women in science” and who led two Hubble Space Telescope Teams.

### **The Discovery Museum Receives Minimal Government Support**

By national standards, The Discovery Museum’s current level of government support is below average nationwide, science and technology centers receive 24.4% of their funding from the public. Discovery’s public support currently stands at below 21%. Even within Bridgeport, our public funding is in line with other institutions, which have a portion of their expense budgets subsidized by the City. Because The Discovery Museum receives no such support from Bridgeport, we have relied on an annual operating grant through the Commission on Culture and Tourism to help make ends meet. This has now become especially important since we are hosting the Discovery Science Magnet School adjacent to our facility yet we receive no public funding. This will be especially challenging for our institution given the attention that will result from this unique model of a science inter-district magnet school adjacent to a science museum. Together with Sacred Heart University and Bridgeport Board of Education, we are

participating in the development of a science method-based curriculum that will be used for teaching 500 students that will be a 70/30 mix from in and outside of Bridgeport.

### **The Discovery Museum Requests Your Continued Support**

We ask for the State's continued support of our work in 2010 - 2011 at a level comparable to our current grant of \$365,000 which represents a 23% reduction from our starting 2009 number and for that level of support to continue through 2011-12. Of course, we understand these are extremely difficult economic times, and are grateful for any funding, however, losses in our endowment and deep reductions in private funding opportunities will make the proposed additional 33% cut in the Governor's budget problematic and would eliminate many of our programs and staff. The Discovery Museum's science and technology mission and the work we do with local school districts to support science literacy for all children is perfectly aligned with our state's direction and needs in these challenging economic times. Career opportunities of the future remain in clean energy, healthcare, information technology and education, where knowledge of science and technology is critical. Tackling our state's achievement gap becomes even more important as job markets tighten, making it harder for people with marginal skills to find meaningful employment. With enrichment programs that target what young people need to know and be able to do in science reaching tens of thousands of children each year, and construction of the Discovery Magnet School, a 500 student pre-K to 8 inter-district magnet school on museum grounds, the Discovery Museum is ready to do its part to bring about our region's future prosperity. We appreciate your support through these challenging economic times.

Attachments:

Wings & Wheels Discovery Event



## ARE YOU INTERESTED IN HELPING CONNECTICUT'S CHILDREN WHILE THOUSANDS OF POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS LEARN ABOUT YOUR COMPANY?



On Memorial Day weekend 2010, The Discovery Museum, Three Wing Flying Services, and Black Horse Garage proudly present **"Wings & Wheels: Corsairs Over Connecticut."**

This spectacular three-day event will celebrate the **70th anniversary of the famous F4U Corsair**, our honored military veterans, and **Discovery Museum and its mission** to increase science literacy for Connecticut's students so they can become highly skilled engineers, scientists and technology specialists in the competitive marketplace.

Founded almost **50 years ago**, the Discovery Museum has evolved into a regional educational resource touching tens of thousands of children annually and their teachers through a wide variety of science programs and services. Discovery's commitment to science education and Bridgeport public schools in particular is deep and far-reaching:

- Serve 543 school groups on-site and 400 groups off-site, **reaching 40,000 students**;
- Provide enriched programming for children left alone after school. Working through Bridgeport's Lighthouse program, **more than 400 children** enjoy safe, after-school and summer science programs;
- Deliver almost **3,500 hours in Bridgeport public and parochial classrooms** teaching hands-on, mind-on science with curriculum that meets state Department of Education standards;
- Supply science enrichment to **275 Talented and Gifted** Bridgeport students, grades 4-8;
- Provide custom inter-district programs (including Fairfield, Stratford, Trumbull, Monroe) to build relationships among more than 1,000 urban and suburban students;
- Taught **950 students** during 3-day green expo **energy sustainability and environmental stewardship**; grades 1-7, from greater Bridgeport region including Stamford and Newtown;
- Home to NASA's Challenger Learning Center, only 52 in the world, and the Henry B. duPont III Planetarium;
- **Discovery Science Magnet School** to be completed 2011-12. Unique national model in partnership with Sacred Heart University; will host **500 pre-K-8th graders**; 70% from Bridgeport, 30% from the suburbs.

Despite the good news of substantive outreach and a new partner school, Discovery's **revenues were cut by more than \$250K** in grants, aid, donations, and other revenues in 2009. More state budget cuts are coming. Further, the new state-of-the-art school is a Bridgeport public school and does not bring new funding to Discovery.

The success of "Wings & Wheels: Corsairs Over Connecticut" will help sustain our commitment to the thousands of schoolchildren we teach while providing the southern New England region a memorable, fun-filled weekend of family activities in the air and on the ground. **In 2005, more than 40,000 attended a similar event at the same venue, and this year's attendance is expected to be even bigger!**

In this time of heightened **corporate citizenship** and **national focus on science literacy**, Wings & Wheels provides a platform tailor-made to promote both. As an event sponsor, your firm will be prominently featured in extensive local, regional and national media and in on-site materials from admission tickets to banners. Your contribution will position your company as a **thoughtful corporate citizen and benefactor** to our area's **school children especially those who have to struggle with less**. Please review the sponsorship opportunities enclosed, and call us at **203-372-3521 x123 to become a sponsor today!**

We reach the children hungry for knowledge, driven by curiosity, inspired by wonder. Help us feed their imaginations and protect their futures. Help us keep the spark of Discovery alive!

Very truly yours,

Donna M. Curran  
Development Director  
The Discovery Museum

Tim Brady  
President  
Three-Wing Flying Services

Mitchell P. Marsico  
Vice President  
Black Horse Garage

